

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 9, 1998**

The On-Site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, September 9, 1998, at 2:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Steven Baker of the Arizona Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the technical training courses for assessors.*

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Baker opened the meeting by referencing a fax he had transmitted to committee members prior to the teleconference. The fax consisted of gas chromatography (GC) data from an analyst's hard copy file with evidence that the analyst had turned back the instrument's clock. This falsification of records was discovered in a routine audit. Mr. Baker used this fax to emphasize the need for rigorous assessor training, especially in the area of data review.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Mr. William Toth reported that, due to scheduling conflicts, he had been unable to obtain an estimated price from the Registrar's Accreditation Board (RAB) for certifying the Basic Training Course. He hopes to have this information in hand by the next scheduled teleconference. Mr. Baker commented that he had heard that other organizations, such as the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), might also be interested in putting together an acceptable course.

Ms. Marlene Patillo reported that she is in the process of compiling, with an index, the on-site assessment checklists in one electronic format on one diskette. The only checklist she does not yet have are the radiochemistry (radchem) checklists. Mr. Stan Morton of the Department of Energy (DOE) is responsible for preparing the radchem checklists. Since Mr. Morton's DOE duties have been expanded, Mr. Havis Harrison, also of DOE, will occasionally be his committee substitute. Mr. Harrison is an auditor, and his practical auditing experience will be valuable in preparing the checklists. It was also noted that Mr. George Dilbeck (702-798-2104), of the National Environmental Research Laboratory (NERL) in Las Vegas, NV, works with radiochemistry and might also be available to consult on the radchem checklists. It was generally agreed that the checklists should be reviewed by the committee members before they are transmitted to Ms. Jeanne Mourrain. Ms. Patillo will e-mail the completed checklists to Mr. Baker by September 30, 1998. Mr. Baker will distribute them to committee members.

In light of Mr. Morton's increased duties, Mr. Baker suggested that Mr. Harrison officially replace Mr. Morton on the committee. This suggestion was taken under advisement.

Ms. Patillo reported new contact information. She now has a business e-mail address. Ms. Patillo's e-mail address is *mpatillo@mde.state.md.us*.

A committee member pointed out an article in the July 23, 1998 issue of *Environmental Lab Washington Report*. The article indicates some confusion about technical training issues, including grandfathering issues. The committee agreed that Ms. Mourrain is generally the liaison between NELAC committees and the media, and that Ms. Mourrain might be best able to address this confusion with the publications editors.

The committee discussed a NELAC forum that will be held in South Carolina on October 8, 1998. Ms. Carol Batterton, Mr. Jerry Parr, and Mr. Ken Jackson will be in attendance. The purpose of the forum is to inform the South Carolina laboratory community about NELAC and the NELAC process. Similar meetings will be held in Hartford, CT, on November 12, 1998, and in Concord, NH, on November 13, 1998. Pennsylvania has held three such meetings around the state.

Mr. Wayne Davis announced that he has been asked by Ms. Carolyn Cross for a list of committee members who will be rotating off the committee in the coming year. Subsequent discussion revealed that Mr. Baker, Mr. Davis, Ms. Patillo, and Mr. Toth have all been with the committee since its inception. Since committee members are appointed for a five-year term and NELAC is now in its fifth year, they will rotate off the committee. It was noted that the committee will lose most of its historic perspective if so large a membership change occurs. Mr. Davis will discuss this issue with Ms. Cross.

COMMENTS ON TECHNICAL TRAINING COURSES

Mr. Baker asked if all committee members had received his e-mail concerning the technical training courses. The committee then entered into a discussion which included the following comments and suggestions about the information contained in the e-mail.

- **Organics Course** - It was suggested that the one-day course and high pressure liquid chromatography (HPLC) be combined, and that a half-day be added to gas chromatography (GC) and to gas chromatography/mass spectroscopy (GC/MS).
- **Sample Preparation** - The committee entered into considerable discussion of whether sample preparation, including extraction records, will be covered in the Organics course and if so, where in the course it will occur. It was noted that the purpose of the technical training course is not to train auditors in a particular procedure, but to train them in how to audit. An auditor must have the ability to review data and can always go to the appropriate method in order to get the particulars of sample preparation for that method. Several committee members pointed out that proper sample preparation is necessary for a proper analysis. They also pointed out that it is not necessary to enter into the theory behind sample preparation in order to include it in the course. It was suggested that the Organics course include a sample preparation and instrumentation day. It was also suggested that, in order to make the audit a true data quality audit, extraction records be included with instrument records in the data package examined by the auditor.
- **HPLC Experience (Tuesday)** - In discussion of references to HPLC experience it was noted that the auditor needs to be technically conversant in HPLC procedures even if he or she has

never used HPLC as an analyst. The laboratory cannot educate the auditor on-site. It was suggested that this section's language be changed to more clearly reflect this.

- **Data Review Day (Friday)** - The committee debated grading data package reviews after completion of the training course versus grading data package reviews during the training course. One suggestion was that course participants be mailed a written explanation of the rights and wrongs of their data package reviews after conclusion of the training course. Several committee members felt strongly that these evaluations would be more helpful if they occur while all the course participants are still present, but they acknowledged that this would add another day to the course. One compromise suggestion was made to reduce the number of data packages reviewed and risk missing some techniques and/or some matrices. The committee suggested one data package each for Method Detection Limit (MDL), HPLC, GC, and GC/MS. A final compromise suggestion was that each course participant receive a dummy data package through which they would be led during class, and then receive a "real" test package on which they would be evaluated. This suggestion met with approval from the committee. The committee was also in agreement that a master file of data packages should be maintained for all courses, and that the data packages must be reviewed by experts before they are used for training purposes. This would provide more consistency than allowing course providers to prepare their own data packages. In response to a question of how the data package review will be scored, the committee agreed that the review will be scored according to the requirements set forth in Chapter Five (Quality Systems) of the NELAC Standard and the pertinent analytical method(s). Course participants will be given the method(s) they need to perform data review so that they don't have to anticipate the course provider. The committee discussed whether data reduction and validation discussions will be included with instrument software. One member suggested providing course participants with a list of supplemental training courses provided by such organizations as the American Chemical Society (ACS) or instrument manufacturers. It was noted that such courses might be either generic or instrument-specific.
- **Ion Chromatography** - In response to a question of whether ion chromatography will be incorporated into HPLC or an inorganic training course, it was decided that ion chromatography will be included in the Inorganic Nonmetals course.
- **Miscellaneous** - The committee entered into some discussion of Confidential Business Information (CBI) and Performance Based Measurement Systems (PBMS) issues. The CBI portion of the Basic Training Course may need to be lengthened. The technical training courses might have to address PBMS issues. In discussion of PBMS it was noted that an auditor can only review data quality. An auditor cannot review all existing technologies. It was also noted that state labs might not have enough in-house expertise to evaluate every new methodology. A commercial laboratory may develop a new methodology, or proprietary technology, in order to make money. It was noted that state law rather than federal law determines acceptance of proprietary technology. Although NELAC is supposed to mean unhindered reciprocity, this reliance on state law is a potential hindrance to NELAC.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Baker will incorporate the committee's comments into a new technical training course outline for discussion at the next teleconference. The committee tentatively planned to meet again by teleconference on October 28, 1998, at 12:30 p.m. EST. Mr. Baker will communicate the specific dial-in details to the committee before that time.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 9, 1998**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ms. Patillo will assemble and index checklists in one electronic format and e-mail to Mr. Baker for distribution to the committee.	9/30/98
2.	Mr. Baker will incorporate the committee's comments into the Technical Training Course outline, and will finalize arrangements for the next teleconference (tentatively scheduled for October 28, 1998 at 12:30 p.m. EST).	9/30/98
3.	Mr. Toth will obtain an estimated cost from RAB for certifying the Basic Training Course.	10/28/98
4.	Mr. Davis will clarify with Ms. Cross the rotation of members off the On-Site Assessment Committee.	10/28/98

**PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 9, 1998**

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